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| English garden and the culture of gardening in Russia |
| Final Project |

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| Elena Moskalskaya  Moscow, 2017 |

## Introduction

The purpose of this review is to give an overview of historical tendencies influencing two countries: Britain and Russia. The gardening cultures of the two comparison counties are studied and considered from a historical perspective.

It’s hard to compare Russian gardening culture being an endless reflection of various influences to British, being formed by the most enthusiastic gardeners ever with its capital, London, being the world recognized capital city of garden design, so this study is an attempt not only to compare but to trace the influences and tendencies common to both British and Russian gardening culture in various time periods from prehistoric to contemporary times.

## Prehistoric agriculture and open space design

The Neolithic introduction of farming was one of the biggest changes faced by human history. Transit from a hunter-gathering way of life to farming gave rise to worldwide change of a landscape. In the British Isles, it led to formation of enclosed settlement known as hillforts, and to small enclosures in which plants were cultivated on a domestic scale, known as 'Celtic fields'. The earliest information about designed open space in the British Isles dates back to some 5,000 years ago when some sacred outdoor spaces, the 'henge' monuments, like Stonehenge, incorporating lunar and solar alignments were built in the British Isles.



*Stonehenge, Wiltshire, England, between 3100 and 2800 BC*

Prehistoric tribes living on the territory of the what we call European Russia nowadays were no farmers. The three climatic zones that cover most of European Russia were temperate forest, taiga and steppe, only the latter had a rainfall high enough to support grasses and other plants to provide feed to horses, but before mechanized agriculture, it could not support farming. Nomadic Slavonic tribes were worshipping Perun, a thunder God with an enormous axe, and built Perun’s sanctuaries near each significant nomad camp. Some of them survived to the present day.



*Perun’s sanctuary on Lysa Hora (Bald Mountain, Kiev)*

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| Roman conquest of the British Isles/ The Bosporan KingdomThe farming history of Russia starts with the Greeks colonized the shores of the Black Sea to grow grain for home consumption (back in Greece, good farmland was in short supply). The Bosporan Kingdom became the longest-lived Roman client state.Greeks and Romans not only built their beautiful temples on the shores of the Black sea, but also produced wines which did well on endless Crimean hillsides.The earliest British examples of the type of space we now call 'gardens', were made by the Romans after the Claudian invasion of 43 AC.  They built luxurious residential palaces with palace gardens of a type which had originated in the East Mediterranean and West Asia. The influence of this garden type extended into the period of Anglo, Saxon and Scandinavian invasions when 'English' culture became established, but few details survive from this period. Romans treated their gardens as outdoor rooms, the perfect place to entertain guests and relax. Traditional English garden still uses gardening techniques which the Romans established 2,000 years ago, from turning soil in the autumn and mixing compost, to hoeing beds and sowing seeds in spring.  Romans introduced fifty new plant foods to Britain, some species were imported for consumption, others were introduced as crops, ornamentals, herbs, and fruit trees wherever Britain’s climate proved suitable for cultivation. Even apples and pears were brought to the Isles by the invaders. The best example of the Roman Garden in the British Isles is probably [Fishbourne Roman Palace](http://www.britainexpress.com/attractions.htm?attraction=52" \o "Fishbourne Roman Palace) in Sussex, where an early garden has been partly reconstructed.  |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  |  *[Fishbourne Roman Palace](http://www.britainexpress.com/attractions.htm?attraction=52" \o "Fishbourne Roman Palace) in Sussex, England. Old plan and modern reconstruction. Originally built around 1st century AD.*  Fishbourne shows a carefully symmetrical formal planting of low box hedges split by graveled walks. The hedges are punctuated by small niches which probably held ornaments like statues, urns, or garden seats. The formal garden near the house gave way to a landscaped green space leading down to the waterside below. There is also a small kitchen garden which is planted with fruits and vegetables common in Roman Britain.Medieval gardens In the pre-Christianity tradition gardens were for either for agricultural purposes or were treated as a dining room, sometimes really huge. Christianity with its concept of the paradise associated with the Garden of Eden demanded a fresh approach to gardening.  From the beginning of a recognized art of gardening, the paradise was thought of as a decorative place. Besides, monastic gardens provided medicine and food for the monks and for the local community, not only for consumption but also for sale.  Enclosed within wattle fences, raised beds were filled with scented flowers and herbs. Trellis arbours ensured privacy and provided shade while the sound of fountains and bird song filled the air.  This tradition was originally set by Benedict of Nursia, founder of the monastery of Monte Cassino, Italy, in 529 AD who said, “Before all things, and above all things, special care must be taken of the sick.”. Later the tradition was successfully picked up by Europe, the British Isles and Russia.    *Mount Grace Priory Cloister. Reconstruction drawing by Judith Dobie of the priory in the early 16th century*  The structure of the monastic garden was similar in both countries of comparison: herbs were cultivated in the ‘physic garden’ composed of well-ordered rectangular beds, while orchards, fishponds and dovecotes ensured there would be food for all. The secluded garden, or ‘Hortus Conclusus’, was associated with the Virgin Mary in the monastery garden (later, in royal palaces and manor houses it represented a garden of earthly delights). Even the list of herbs grown in the physical garden was similar in Britain and Russia. It included: Lemon Balm, Milk Thistle, Fennel  Violet, Lavender, Parsley, Rose (wild), Chamomile, Basil, Garlic, Sage and Basil. Some other plants had symbolic religious meaning. For example, wild roses that were widely grown and used medicinally, symbolised many different things, from religious devotion to romantic love. The [red rose](http://www.theenglishgarden.co.uk/plants/roses-to-grow-this-valentines-day/) could represent the blood of Christ and the martyrs; the Virgin Mary and the Immaculate Conception were compared to a white rose. Red carnations represented true love, while Sweet Violet was a symbol of humility, but also a physical plant for heart diseases.   |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | *Physic garden at Spas-Yefimiev Cloister, Suzdal, Russia. Founded in 1352.* |   Other medieval garden types were: castle gardens (herbers), palace gardens, manor gardens and peasant gardens.  In Britain, the ladies were the gardeners, for they had been taught by monks how to plant healing herbs among their vegetables, so that they not only got extra dishes and green food for the table, but were also able to help the sick and wounded in castle or village.  In Russia, terem gardens were kitchen gardens comprised of fruit trees and bushes, vegetables and opened ground seedbeds. Walking in their terem gardens was one of very few entertainments allowed to women therefore much attention was given to the landscape design. For example, two famous gardens of that period – the Upper and the Lower Kremlin gardens (1681) - were decorated with hanging gardens.    *Painting by V. Shwarz. Scene from a family life of Russian tzars.*  In both countries, exactly like all over the world, peasants were interested with survival problem. How to get food for winter, how to get food for summer, how to feed kids and cattle, etc. So the peasant gardens were very utilitarian, down-to-earth kitchen gardens. Renaissance and Baroque gardens. Formal parksThe renaissance garden broke down the wall between the garden, the house, and the outside landscape. Main feature of a Renaissance garden was a strict geometrical orthogonal pattern. The garden mirrored the house, it’s symmetry and proportions. For the first time since the Romans left, sundials and statues were once more popular garden ornaments. Renaissance garden was an intimate place to think and walk, like during the Roman’s reign.  |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  |  *Hampton Court, London, England. The pond garden.*In Britain, gardens were influenced by renaissance design ideas, from Italy, France and Holland, established till the end of the fifteenth century. The gardens of the sixteenth century, often described as Tudor (sometimes Elizabethan) gardens, were part-medieval and part-renaissance in character.Baroque gardening tradition is a natural continuity of a Renaissance design. They both display orthogonal grid of avenues, but in a Baroque garden some avenues are more important (i.e. wider, brightly decorated) than others. Both Baroque and Renaissance garden tell visitors some story either in a language of symbols, but if a Renaissance garden was to soak some air in some pleasant decorations, a Baroque garden was for show, it was a physical expression of the master’s power and importance.In Russia, all gardens with geometrical structure are referred to as regular (formal) parks, probably because most of Russian parks before and during Peter the Great reign could be called regular or semi-regular, but could hardly be attributed to pure renaissance or pure baroque style.  |  |  | | --- | --- | | *Knot Garden at Hatfield House* | The Tudor garden is an English actualization of the Renaissance garden. English lawn and English knot garden date back to that period. Knots were intricate patterns of lawn hedges, usually of box, intended to be viewed from the mount, or raised walks. The spaces between the hedges were often filled with flowers, shrubs, or herbs. Famous British maze gardens is a later pattern of a Tudor knot garden. |  Renaissance garden tradition was brought to Russia by foreign gardeners hired by Alexey I, father of Peter the Great, to decorate his Izmaylovsky palace garden. He invited Dutch gardeners, so Renaissance gardens were introduced in Russia in their Dutch interpretation.Peter I was greatly impressed by Holland-style baroque gardens he was brought up in. When a boy, he was taught to understand symbols and allegories underlying the garden design, later this skill was made obligatory for Russian upper-class. It’s worth to be noted, that the concept of a public park was not set in England during the Victorian age, but was invented by Peter the Great. Summer Garden in St.-Petersburg was the first public garden ever. According to Dmitry Likhachev, [Russian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia) medievalist, “His (Peter’s) Summer Garden was a sort of an Academy to bring basics of European education to Russian people”. During his reign, Peter I established several regular parks, later redesigned and enlarged by his ancestors.  |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  |  *Letniy Sad (Summer Garden). St. Petersburg, Russia*  |  |  | | --- | --- | |  |  |  The Dutch offshoot of Baroque style in parks advocated more water and fountains. Take, for example,  [Westbury Court](http://www.britainexpress.com/counties/glouces/gardens/Westbury-Court.htm) (Gloucestershire) in Britain and Peterhof in Russia.*Peterhof. Cascade Fountains. St. Petersburg, Russia*[*Westbury Court*](http://www.britainexpress.com/counties/glouces/gardens/Westbury-Court.htm)*Garden, Gloucestershire, Britain*English Landscape GardensThe 18th century saw a swing from Renaissance formality to a more "natural" look. Firstly, English landscape gardens were neoclassical re-creations of the imagined landscapes of the classical world. This is a pure British inventions and the name of its inventor has come down to us, he was [William Kent](http://www.britainexpress.com/History/bio/kent.htm), designer of an influential garden for Lord Burlington at [Chiswick House](http://www.britainexpress.com/attractions.htm?attraction=156" \o "Chiswick House) based on carefully calculated vistas with temples, statues, and classical ornaments punctuating openings in treed parkland. Since this invention that had an enormous effect upon the course of English gardening and architectural style, Britain has never renounced its title of the pioneer in the art of gardening.*Peter Andreas Rysbrack. A view of Chiswick House from the South-West. Around 1720* Lines were no longer straight, paths curve and wander, and parterres are replaced by grass. Trees were planted in clusters rather than in straight lines, and the rectangular ponds were replaced with rounded lakes. The landscape garden made the English country house a part of the fields and farmlands surrounding it. Grass parkland was brought right up to the doors of the house. |

The first and, by no doubt, the most famous English Landscape Garden in Russia is Peterhof, established by Catherine the Great who also had brought hiring an English gardener into vogue for several centuries. This type of garden was greatly loved by Russian nobles (Maryino palace near Moscow and Vorontsovsky palace park in Crimea).



## *Vorontzov Palace Landscape Park, Alupka, Crimea*

## Victorian Gardens

## The Victorian age, the age of industrial revolution and dirty gettos, also saw a profusion of public gardens and green spaces aimed at bringing culture and decrease drunkenness of the lower classes. This effort was highly supported and financed by authorities. Some of the finest Victorian gardens are public parks, like People's Park in Halifax. Beginning of public gardens in Russia also dates back to the same period. Take, for example, Hermitage Garden in Moscow.   Middle class British people also began to spend more time in their gardens, probably because due to the industrial revolution they could devote more time to gardening. Russian landlords and their wives acquired the habit, interest in agriculture and gardening was in fashion.

## Gardening tastes changed again, to massive flower beds (bedding out plants raised in greenhouses), exotic colours, and intricate designs.

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## *People’s Park, Halifax, West Yorkshire, England. It was given to the people of Halifax in 1857 by local carpet manufacturer Sir Francis Crossley*

## Taste in the late Victorian period varied between formal and the "wild", landscape-ish garden.

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| William Robinson wrote ‘The English Flower Garden’, perhaps the most influential work in British garden history. Landscape design students still read it in their colleges. Robinson, emphasized a natural look, with creepers and ramblers, hardy shrubs, roses underplanted, herbaceous plants and bulbs. |  |

## Also we are in debt to Victorian garden style for garden squares. Examples of these London squares exist at Belgravia and Notting Hill. Russian word “сквер» means such a garden square.

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## *Left – Belgrave Square, London, present time. Right – Bolshoy Theatre Square, Moscow, 1981*

## Victorian age in England coincides with rise of popularity of dachas in Russia. Russian dacha is a house/cottage with a small garden comprised of kitchen and decorative parts. Decorative part of a dacha garden lovingly cared for by a Russian dachnik is a local interpretation of a Victorian garden, but with some local variances. If an English cottage is fenced, the fence is decorative and serves as a part of a garden design. Russian fence is high. English garden is carefully incorporated into landscape, Russian garden exists separately behind the fence. Beauty of an English garden invites passersby to enjoy it, Russian garden is for its owners only. Observation point of an English garden lies outside, and one can enjoy beautiful sight by shifting his glance from one point to another, but to enjoy Russian dacha garden you have to walk through it wondering what’s there, behind that small bush?

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## *Recommended landscape designs for a typical Russian dacha land plot.*

## Modern garden

## Gertrude Jekyll, 20th century successor to W. Robinson, popularized the idea of garden planning based on colour schemes. This built on the tradition of the "Cottage garden", with its profusion of flowers wherever space permits, and climbers on trellises and walls. Jekyll saw the house and garden as parts of an integral whole. This type of garden is actively promoted by Russian landscape designers for private cottages.

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## [*Left - Hestercombe*](http://www.britainexpress.com/attractions.htm?attraction=2049)*Gardens, Somerset, England. Right – Gorky Park, Rostov-on-Don, Russia*

## England has also introduced abstract and post-abstract types of gardens to the world. This type is characterized by clean lines, freedom from ornament, simple colors and geometrical elegance. All those high fashioned “hipster” Moscow gardens, including Gorky Park and Bauman Garden, belong to abstract type and were planned by English gardeners.

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## *Left – Highgrove Garden, decorated and owned by Prince Charles. Right – Sokolniki Park, Moscow*

## Concluding remarks

## This study was an attempt to analyze and describe historical trends that influenced both countries and to provide examples of how this influence was materialized. Gardening has always been the reflection of current trends and a matter of personal taste, therefore it is hard to find unaltered examples of historical gardens. In my work I’ve tried to show such untouched examples of outstanding art of gardening.

## Interesting, that both Britain and Russia share passion for creating green, growing spaces. But if the first has obtained the title of worldwide fashion queen several centuries ago, the latter always was a faithful follower. Anyway, celebrating the 9th of May at dacha or enjoying Gorky Park shady avenues we shall be thankful to British gardening tradition.

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